



What is intravenous steroid treatment?

Steroids can reduce inflammation and swelling around the eyes, relieving pressure on the optic nerves and preventing further eye damage. They can also alleviate pain and double vision caused by inflamed eye muscles.

However, they do not reverse any changes, such as bulging eyes and retracted eyelids, that have already been caused by the disease.

When you attend for your consultation at the eye clinic, the doctor will ask you some questions to gain a detailed clinical history. Based on this, they may recommend you take intravenous steroids. You may be required to take some additional tests before treatment is started.

What does the treatment involve?

The intravenous steroid treatment will be carried out in the eye clinic. You will see the doctor, who will explain the process of taking intravenous steroids, and the potential side-effects. You will then be taken to a consultation room where the nurse will take your blood pressure, pulse rate, breathing rate and blood sugar levels (if you have diabetes).

A small plastic tube, called a cannula, will then be inserted into the back of your hand. The intravenous steroid treatment will then be given through a saline drip. The treatment will take approximately one hour. At the end of the treatment, the cannula will be removed, and a small dressing will be applied. You will be able to go home after the treatment. You will receive one infusion every week, for 12 weeks.


What are the side effects of treatment?

Steroids are powerful drugs, and so some patients can experience side-effects. The side-effects can vary significantly between people, and not everyone experiences side-effects. In the short term, the side-effects can be mild, and will usually resolve once you finish the treatment course.

The common side-effects include:

- A metallic taste
- Difficulty sleeping
- Indigestion
- Mood swings



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- Increased appetite
 - Flushing of the face (redness)
 - Palpitations
 - Headache

Long-term treatments can cause further side-effects:

- Weight gain
- Skin thinning
- High blood sugar
- High blood pressure
- Thinning of the bones (Osteoporosis)
- Cataracts

All patients will be started on a tablet to protect the stomach and a high dose of Vitamin D for the duration of the steroid treatment. Post-menopausal women and individuals over 50 may need a bone scan to assess the risk of osteoporosis.

If you have diabetes, steroid treatment may impact your blood sugar control. It is important to inform your diabetes doctor or nurse about your methylprednisolone treatment so they can adjust your medication if necessary. We also recommend monitoring your blood sugar more frequently during the steroid treatment.

Additionally, steroids can sometimes reveal underlying mental health issues. If you experience low mood during your treatment, especially if you feel you might be at risk of harming yourself, please seek help immediately from either our clinic, your GP practice or local Emergency Department. The NHS has freely available information online which can be accessed here: [Get help with low mood, sadness or depression - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/health-a-z/low-mood-sadness-or-depression).

If you suffer deterioration in your vision and/or colour vision, please contact 020 7253 3411 or attend the Moorfields Emergency department at City Road, open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for eye emergencies only.

If you are worried or have any questions about the side effects of intravenous steroid treatment, please contact your ophthalmologist, who will be happy to discuss them with you.

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Moorfields Direct telephone helpline

Phone: 020 7566 2345
Monday-Friday, 8.30am-9pm
Saturday, 9am-5pm
Information and advice on eye conditions and treatments from experienced
ophthalmic-trained nurses.

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

Phone: 020 7566 2324 or 020 7566 2325
Email: moorfields.pals@nhs.net
Opening hours: Monday to Friday, except bank holidays
Moorfields' PALS team provides confidential advice and support to help you with
any concerns you may have about the care we provide, guiding you through the
different services available at Moorfields. The PALS team can also advise you on
how to make a complaint.

Your right to treatment within 18 weeks

Under the NHS constitution, all patients have the right to begin consultant-led
treatment within 18 weeks of being referred by their GP. Moorfields is committed to
fulfilling this right. For more information about your rights and responsibilities,
please visit the Moorfields website and search '[Referrals to treatment \(RTT\)](#)'. To
learn more about your rights under the NHS constitution, visit
www.nhs.uk/choiceinthenhs